



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# John F. Deering Middle School

WEST WARWICK

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 30, 2004



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Purpose and Limits of This Report**

This is the report of the SALT team that visited John F. Deering Middle School from April 26 through April 30, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Deering Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Deering Middle School affect learning?

How well does Deering Middle School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Deering Middle School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

**The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 230 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 30 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report

- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit

- Set in the present, and

- Contains the judgment of the team

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how John F. Deering Middle School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the West Warwick School Department School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The West Warwick School Department, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Deering Middle School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## **2. PROFILE OF DEERING MIDDLE SCHOOL**

John F. Deering Middle School is located in West Warwick, one of the most densely populated towns in Rhode Island. West Warwick was incorporated in 1913 and has a population of approximately 30,000 people in an area of 6.3 square miles.

John F. Deering became a middle school in 1994 and was chosen to become part of the Carnegie Foundation Turning Points project in 1996. One principal and two assistant principals lead Deering. There are 74 faculty members.

Deering has 904 students—334 students in grade six, 307 students in grade seven and 293 students in grade eight. One-hundred-ninety-one students (approximately 21%) receive special education services, and 11 students receive services in English as a Second Language programs (less than one percent). Thirty-four percent of the students receive free or reduced priced lunch. Eighty-seven percent of the students are white, six percent are Hispanic, and three percent are African American. Asian and Native American each represent two percent of the total population.

Each grade level at Deering is divided into heterogeneous teams. Sixth and seventh grade students are grouped heterogeneously in all subject areas. Eighth grade algebra students are grouped homogeneously, but only for mathematics. This is scheduled to change in the 2004-5 school year, when all students will be grouped heterogeneously in all subject areas.

Seven periods comprise the school day, rotating at the semester. All of the teachers/teams have individual prep periods. Additionally, all core and encore teachers have common planning periods every other day. Some teams collaborate within and across the grades and disciplines.

Students stay on the same team and loop in the seventh and eighth grades. Each grade has its own guidance counselor, who follows students for three years. The sixth grade has five teams with two core teachers and one team with three core teachers. Sixth grade core teachers teach two subjects, except for the three teacher team. Each sixth grade team teaches a maximum of 52 students. Each seventh and eighth grade has three teams of four core teachers, each who teach one subject. Each team teaches a maximum of 104 students.

Deering Middle School has a truancy court and a full service health clinic, Thundermist, for all students in grades 6-12. Deering also has two School Resource Officers, a Student Assistance Counselor and a social worker. Other programs within the school, such as the Deering Alternative Education Program and the Social Intervention Program, support student learning. There are opportunities beyond the classroom such as the after school program (WWAND), the athletic program and the mentoring program involving grade 8 and grade 6 students. A school website and a “ramp up” Saturday School and Summer Program further support student learning. A variety of after school and co-curricular activities are available to the students

John F. Deering Middle School was a Blue Ribbon Finalist in the 1999-2000 school year. The school applied for and received a grant for an after school program through the United Way, as well as a Teachers in Technology Grant that provides teachers the opportunity to integrate their units of study with the use of technology.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF JOHN F. DEERING MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

John F. Deering Middle School is a large school that is connected to West Warwick High School. Two capable assistant principals help the principal meet her responsibilities for both schools. Teaching excellence is apparent in a variety of areas. The staff is dedicated to the students and is helpful and friendly. The hallways are dark and bleak, but the classrooms are inviting.

Student behavior is good. Students respect their teachers and their peers. They are most involved in the classes that allow them to take part in their own learning and that challenge them to think.

Each of the grades is divided into autonomous teams. Teachers work hard within these teams to provide an environment in which young adolescents can develop emotionally, intellectually and socially. But, too frequently, students are not held accountable for their learning, and they become detached from the teaching that is taking place. Students who are strong advocates of their own learning effectively navigate through the school. On occasion, they will find themselves in classes where achieving is measured by how much time they sit there, plugging away at simple tasks.

Deering is not guided by a clearly focused vision. The lack of consistency in instruction, accountability for teaching practice and communication among all constituents prevents students from obtaining an equitable education. Teachers do not have a voice in the school. Contractual constraints are used too often as an excuse for the lack of accountability or for program decisions.

Students have the opportunity to become involved in a variety of extra curricula activities ranging from team sports to an after school dance group. Limited interactions between parents and the school diminish the connection between home and school and do not support this critical collaborative relationship.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students too often do not know what it means to be ‘good readers,’ and thus they do not know whether or not they are good readers. When reading self-selected, high-interest books some students are eager to share their insights about the content. Others say that they read merely to meet the standard of reading 25 books a year independently. The students that read for learning are making connections to themselves, the text and the world, accessing their prior knowledge and transferring, and applying the concepts they know to their written and oral responses. However, students throughout the school are not reading consistently to learn. Students generally view reading as a mechanical process. They define reading ‘as decoding’ and reading well as ‘reading orally,’ rather than as reading to comprehend. Students say that they read mostly to answer questions in their class assignments. Many students do not demonstrate an independent use of comprehension strategies in their reading. They often rely on their teachers to direct them. *(following students, talking with students and teachers, observing classes, meeting with students, parents, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2002 Salt Survey report, reviewing school and district report cards, 2003 Information Works!)*

Students write at a functional level for a variety of audiences in all content areas. They use multiple text structures, genres and styles that are appropriate for various purposes: research reports, news articles, persuasive essays, poems, letters and reflections. When they write well, they have a grasp of what makes their writing good. These students understand the expectations required of their writing. They use the writing process, models as benchmarks, and rubrics and self-reflection to improve their writing. These students know that their writing improves when they add relevant detail. Students, who are not writing well, miss the essence of the assigned tasks. They neither recognize the importance of the writing process, nor effectively use it. Their work is disorganized and incoherent; it lacks relevant detail, contains incomplete thoughts and is not clearly focused. They do not revise independently. They rely heavily on copying their teachers’ corrections, rather than on learning from their teachers. Students say they want some opportunities to write about what they like. *(following students, meeting with students, school administrators, reviewing classroom assessments, talking with students and teachers, observing classes, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, 2003 Information Works!, reviewing school and district report cards)*

Students are enthusiastic about Connected Mathematics. They frequently state that math is their favorite subject because they see it is fun and challenging. They are learning and applying math skills and concepts to real life situations. Students consistently explain their thought processes both orally and in writing, using word walls and talking the language of mathematics. They are actively engaged and are gaining an understanding of algebraic concepts. Some students are applying their math skills and concepts in other curriculum areas. Others lack an understanding of this connection and therefore are reluctant to apply mathematics in other content areas. Not all special education students have equal access to the Connected Mathematics program. This is not equitable. *(observing classes, following students, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, classroom textbooks, discussing student work with teachers, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, 2003 Information Works!, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing school and district report cards )*

While some students state that they have adjusted to the distractions inherent in their open classrooms, many claim that it is difficult to learn in this environment. Although most students are involved in learning activities and follow the established procedures, many know how to manipulate their classroom environments. Students often get by without doing any work. Many students do the minimal amount of work and appear to be engaged, when they are actually off task. Many students complete their assigned tasks and sit waiting or doing unrelated or non-rigorous tasks while others complete their work. Students state that they are dissatisfied with the level of challenge in their classes. They say they all do the same thing and that some are being held back until others can complete the task. These negative patterns reduce student learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

Students understand and use criteria and rubrics as a guide to complete their assigned tasks as well as to evaluate their own work. Students use these tools to identify areas of their personal strengths and weaknesses. When students have clear expectations, they are engaged, the quality of their work improves and their off-task behaviors are reduced. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

Students:

- ◆ *Want to be challenged*
- ◆ *Want more choices*
- ◆ *Write in all content areas*
- ◆ *Use rubrics as a way to improve and assess their work*
- ◆ *Enjoy hands on learning and problem solving in the current math program*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

There are extreme inconsistencies in the quality of teaching at Deering Middle School. In classes where teachers facilitate learning, the students are involved. Expectations are clear. Students contribute in a significant way to the class and want to learn. These teachers provide meaningful hands-on involved learning experiences for students. Some teachers keep all students actively involved by utilizing verbal and nonverbal cues to bring them back to task. These deliberate methods of being attentive to what students need engage students and foster their learning. Teachers' levels of enthusiasm, personal connections to students, and applications of their classroom tasks to the real world engage students in learning. In these classes, where students have a positive attitude toward learning; there are fewer discipline issues; students ask more meaningful questions and make deeper connections; and they are more receptive to learning. In these classes teachers make maximum use of instruction time and effectively manage their classrooms. However, far too many classes are teacher led, which fosters rote learning. Instruction is stagnant. Time is ineffectively used. In many classes, teachers talk excessively, engage students in low-level non-productive tasks and set long timetables for students to complete their tasks. All these practices promote student disengagement. Many students say they are bored, their work is too easy, and they want greater challenges. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, meeting with students)*

Teachers use rubrics to provide clear expectations for their students. These indicate the necessary steps for students to take to complete the task. Teachers use rubrics to evaluate the level of their students' performance. Many teachers provide students with feedback and encourage them to rework their assignments to earn better scores. To establish a level of consistency, some teachers are developing common rubrics to use within their teams. These effectively open the line of communication between teachers and students. As a result, students become more accountable for their own work, and they are motivated to learn at a higher level. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

In classes where teachers embrace the Connected Mathematics Program, their lessons challenge students and demand them to use higher order critical thinking skills. Some teachers take advantage of the district mathematics specialist and other professional development to support their implementation of the program. Teachers coach students by asking them to solve problems. They encourage students to think for themselves as they solve problems in multiple ways. Some teachers are even beginning to identify the level of student learning by scoring common task assessments collaboratively. These teaching practices lead to rigorous student learning. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing district and school policies and practices, self study)*

Teachers are not aware of their students' current reading levels. They instruct at the level they assume is appropriate for their students. Many say they do not know how to support struggling readers and that they do not have on-site support. Teachers give students a variety of materials to read across the curriculum. However, most teachers do not teach students how to learn by reading. Thus they do not make an impact on student literacy. Teachers include in their teaching what they have learned about literacy instruction from professional development activities. Grade six teachers consistently provide their students with the strategies they need to become good readers. These teachers model lessons for their students about what good readers do. Literacy is an integral part of all of their content areas. Students are taught to break down various texts by using a variety of comprehension strategies such as KWL, two column note taking, post it notes, highlighting, margin notes and context clues. As a result, sixth grade students are learning effectively how to analyze and interpret text across the curriculum. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, 2003 Salt Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Both core and encore teachers throughout the school provide multiple opportunities for students to practice writing. Some teachers from different content areas work together on projects that require written products. This enables students to see the connections between the content areas and to communicate effectively using a variety of writing styles. Some teams expect students to use the writing process. This is a beginning step to reinforce students' use of the writing process in all content areas. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

**Commendations for John F. Deering Middle School**

Beginning use of rubrics by both teachers and students

Opportunities for writing in all core and encore classes

Acceptance and implementation of Connected Mathematics Program

**Recommendations for John F. Deering Middle School**

Continue professional development to enhance the use of rubrics to challenge students and to improve instruction and learning.

Engage in focused professional development activities in the area of comprehensive literacy.

Employ strategies that will engage all students in active learning.

Maximize instruction time for productive learning.

Continue the professional development opportunities in the implementation of Connected Mathematics.

Determine each student's reading level and teach him at that level. Continually monitor each student's level of performance.

Attend professional development in differentiation of instruction, and integrate these strategies in your classes.

Model and instruct students in the necessary comprehension strategies in all disciplines.

**Recommendations for West Warwick School Department**

Provide at least one full-time literacy professional for the Deering Middle School.

Maintain and support the positions of the mathematics and literacy specialists.

Provide the necessary professional development in the areas of literacy, numeracy, assessment and differentiated instruction.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

Deering Middle School lacks a clear and unified vision. The school community has not come together to decide what it wants this school to look like in the future. Steps toward change are being taken. Teachers have begun to recognize the value of standards, look at student work protocols and support Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) tasks. However, in many instances, administrators, staff, students, families and community members accept the status quo. Too few teachers are active advocates for change. They do not understand their roles and responsibilities in effecting change. Too many students sit in classes without having a voice in their learning. The administrators make changes without having adequate support systems or program evaluations in place and without receiving teacher input. The lack of a shared vision creates an environment that obstructs school improvement. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with students, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan)*

Deering Middle School has created a supportive program, Deering Alternative Education Program (DAEP), for at-risk students. Teachers and students report that this program is essential for the success of these students in school. Students in this program express their sense of belonging and their trust to share who they are. The program identifies individual needs and effectively utilizes a heterogeneous environment that challenges all students through a differentiated approach to instruction. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, school and district administrators, reviewing district improvement plan, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)*

Although the teachers respect that their principal faces challenges and responsibilities in the dual role of chief administrator of both the middle school and the high school, the Deering school community needs the individualized attention of its own leader. Deering's assistant principals successfully handle the day-to-day management of the school, and teachers report that student behavior has improved. Most students are closely supervised, and their behavior is monitored within their individual classrooms. However, supervision is lacking when they travel through the hallways during passing times. Staff members are not visible; therefore, student safety is compromised. Additionally, this lack of staff presence is an opportunity the staff misses to connect with students to establish a culture of community. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers)*

Deering does not embrace a true middle school philosophy. Students and teachers are placed on grade level teams. While students are grouped heterogeneously, they are instructed homogeneously without differentiation for their individual learning needs. This limits their progress at all levels. All core and encore team members have time in their schedules to meet together every other day. Teachers state that this time often is taken up with housekeeping issues. This is an ineffective use of their valuable time. Team time is also part of the schedule at Deering. The teachers and administrators report that individual teams autonomously decide how they will use both their common planning time and their team time. Expectations are not clear about how teachers are to use these times. This creates further inconsistencies in the school. There is no accountability or professional development to support teachers to use these times as a way to develop and utilize strategies to improve learning and teaching. *(following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, 2003 Salt Survey report, meeting with students, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators)*

There are both student and staff groups that are excluded from the mainstream of the school. There is a separation between the sixth grade and the seventh-eighth grades. Sixth grade teachers are excluded from seventh/eighth grade content level meetings. The inequitable placements of many students results in forced tracking. Students are not equitably distributed between teams and among the classes within the teams. Encore teachers have no opportunities to enhance the core curriculum. These teachers have no scheduled time to meet with the core teachers. These divisions often are attributed to a lack of communication, the location of classrooms in the school and the schedule. Many special education students are included in teams for only homeroom and team time. Deering does not support inclusionary practices. As a result, special education students do not have the same education experiences that other students have. Contractual issues and the lack of student progress are cited as reasons why inclusion is not effectively in place. This is not accurate. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school improvement team, school and district administrators, teachers' contract, memorandum of understanding-6/10/97 attachment A, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Deering has a minimal curriculum in place to guide teachers in their instruction. Topic outlines, reading lists, textbooks and New Standards serve as a substitution for a developed curriculum. This leads to inconsistencies of instruction and creates inequitable learning opportunities for students. There is no vertical or horizontal articulation of the curriculum. The present teacher evaluation is an ineffective tool for monitoring and assessing teacher performance. *(talking with teachers, meeting with school improvement team, school and district administrators, teacher evaluation document, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The Deering school improvement team conducted a thorough self-study that identified many of the school's needs. The present school improvement plan does not reflect this study. The District Strategic Plan identifies the need for the involvement and participation of the family and the community in the school. This is addressed only superficially within the Derring school improvement plan. Parents do not know what their roles are within this school. Parents are not involved, as partners, in their children's education. There is a frustration among the staff that parents do not care, rather than a realization that communication with parents may not be adequate. *(meeting with students, parents, school improvement team, school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district improvement plan, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

The physical environment at Deering affects student learning. Lighting is poor in many areas of the school. Common hallways are not well lit, and many classrooms do not have natural light. Extreme differences in temperature exist throughout the school. Both the staff and students state that this creates an uncomfortable learning environment. The open classrooms create a noisy environment that makes it difficult for some students and staff to concentrate. Several safety issues are evident: there is a lack of posted fire evacuation plans in many classrooms; access to the school building is not secured; and there is no visible backup system of emergency lighting. *(observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, and staff, meeting with students, parents, school and district administrators, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

### **Commendations for John F. Deering Middle School**

Thorough self-study

Beginning efforts in looking at student work using protocols

Beginning use of CIM tasks

Deering Alternative Educational Program (DAEP)



**Recommendations for John F. Deering Middle School**

Use the school improvement team as a forum for stakeholders to come together as a school community to develop a shared vision for Deering Middle School.

Advocate for your students, your school and yourself.

Use common planning time as a tool for improving teaching and learning (sharing best practice, looking at student work, cross curricula connections, etc.).

Investigate effective use of team time.

Attend professional development to support effective teaming practices.

Supervise students during transition times.

Review scheduling to increase the amount of time devoted to common planning time.

Review scheduling to allow opportunities to include encore and all special education teachers with grade level teams.

Include the sixth grade in the seventh and eighth grade content level meetings to discuss curriculum and teaching practices.

Base the professional development teachers need on data analysis and teacher input.

Investigate ways to make personal connections between students and adults.

Provide training in all content areas in heterogeneous/differentiated instruction.

Explore inclusive opportunities and supports for special education students to be serviced in their least restrictive environment.

Hold teachers and administrators more accountable to student learning.

Include in your school improvement plan strategies to involve families and community in meaningful ways.

**Recommendations for West Warwick School District**

Appoint a principal whose sole focus and responsibility is the educational leadership of Deering Middle School.

Support the training and time needed for effective middle school teaming.

Establish and engage faculty in the continuum of a curriculum cycle.

Implement a plan for school wide literacy and numeracy instruction.

Change the current teacher evaluation instrument.

Address the numerous facility and safety concerns.

Maintain the Deering Alternative Education Program (DAEP)

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO JOHN F. DEERING MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Teachers at Deering are dedicated to their students. There are many teachers whose excellent practice could serve as a model for professional development within your school. Work together and hold one another accountable for quality learning and teaching.

The lack of a clear and shared vision impedes teachers, staff and administration in identifying where you are headed or how to get there. Collaboratively develop a common vision. Work with the school improvement team to develop a school improvement plan to focus your direction and help to develop consistency.

The staff has identified the need for communication, collaboration and consistency. All too frequently the lack of teacher voice has allowed you to accept changes passively that you might not agree with or understand. Together take on the work of developing a school governance structure in which there is a shared vision and shared decision-making.

Use the conclusions and recommendations in this report to begin to dialogue and to create an environment where everyone works together to establish a culture of learning and a sense of community.

## **ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

### **John F. Deering Middle School**

April 30, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports* (available [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org)). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa Ltd. weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits be conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1<sup>st</sup> edition* (available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org)).

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa Ltd. monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa Ltd.'s monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The routine steps that Catalpa Ltd. completed for this review were:

1. discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
2. daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
3. observation of a portion of the visit
4. discussion with the principal at the end of the visit week regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
5. thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
2. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
3. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that was consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
May 23, 2004:

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for John F. Deering Middle School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Deering Middle School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following fourteen students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Deering Middle School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2003 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2003 Information Works!*

*2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*

*2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*School and District Report Cards*

*Teachers' contract, memorandum of understanding- 6/10/97 attachment A*

## State Assessment Results for Deering Middle School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

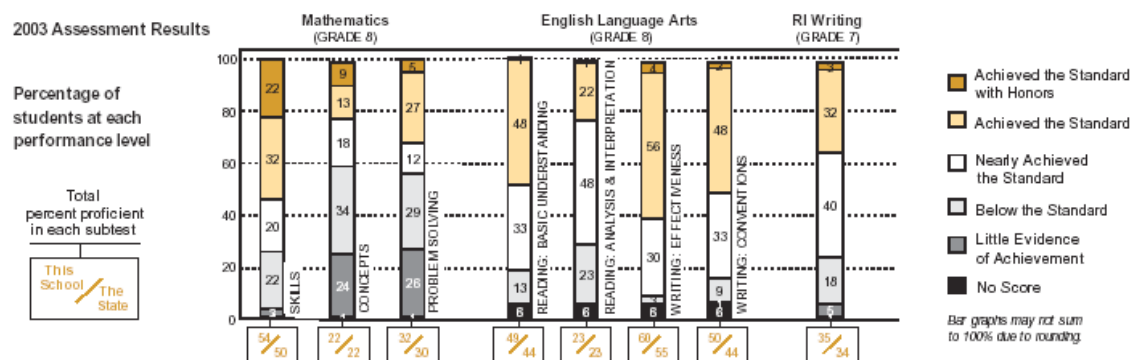
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

### RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

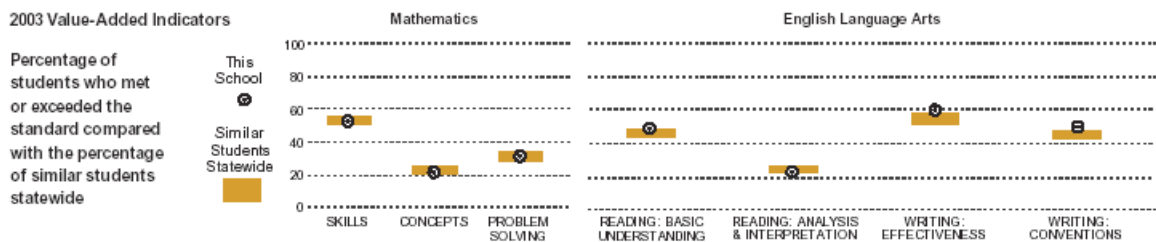
**Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**



RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school’s students.

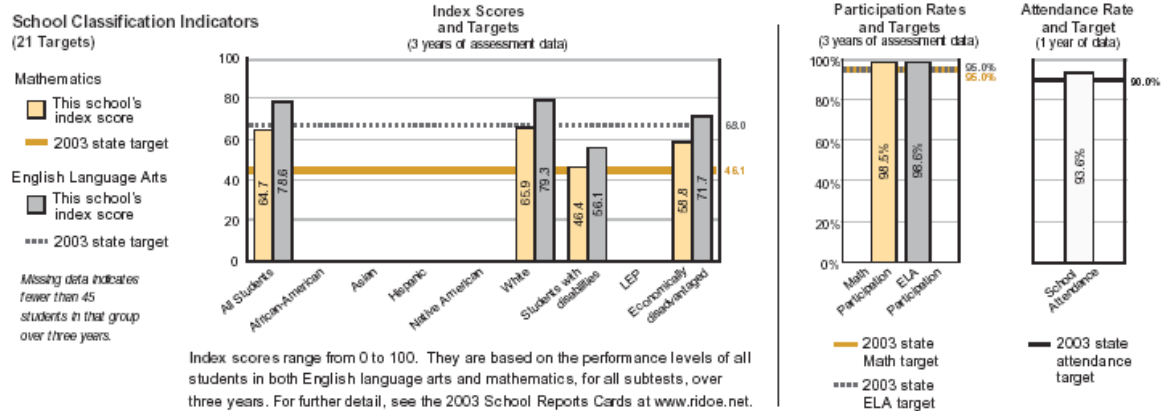
Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display, showing targets and index scores, as established in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation, creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

Table 3. 2001-2002 Student Results across Subgroups



## SCHOOL REPORT CARD

John F. Deering Middle School has been categorized as a school in need of improvement/making insufficient progress on the basis of its assessment results from 2000 to 2003. The following is the school report card that shows the schools performance in relation to the 2003 annual measurable objectives (AMO) in accordance with the federal legislation of No Child Left Behind.



Table 4. 2003 School Report Card

Rhode Island School: John F. Deering Middle School  
 Rhode Island District: West Warwick

## School Report Card - 2003 - Accountability

## Grade 8

## Index Proficiency Score

Student Group	English Language Arts - Target Score: 68						Mathematics - Target Score: 46.1					
	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target Met	District 01-03	State 01-03	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target met	District 03	State 01-03
All Students	76.3	78.5	2.2	2	78.5	77.8	64.2	64.6	0.3	2	64.6	63
African-American	*	*	*	1	*	69.1	*	*	*	1	*	47
Asian	*	*	*	1	*	77.3	*	*	*	1	*	61.5
Hispanic	*	*	*	1	*	67.6	*	*	*	1	*	46
Native American	*	*	*	1	*	75.5	*	*	*	1	*	56.4
White	77.3	79.3	1.9	2	79.3	83	65.7	65.9	0.2	2	65.9	70.2
Students with Disabilities	55.7	56	0.2	0	56	61.1	43.9	46.4	2.4	2	46.4	43.8
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	*	*	1	*	59.1	*	*	*	1	*	39.6
Economically Disadvantaged Students	69.9	71.6	1.7	2	71.6	68.4	57.8	58.7	0.9	2	58.7	47.7

\* fewer than 45 test takers.

## Percent of Students Tested (2001-2003):

## Attendance Rate: (2003)

	This School	This District	This State
ELA	98.6	98.6	97.5
Mathematics	98.5	98.5	97.2

This School	This District	The State
93.6	93.6	93.1

## Targets Met/Missed:

## Classification:

	Targets Met	Targets Missed
ELA	8	1
Mathematics	9	0

**School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress**

## Target Met Code:

0 - did not meet target      3 - 3 year SH  
 1 - met target because of minimum N      4 - 1 year AMO  
 2 - 3 year AMO      5 - 1 year SH

Information Works! data for John F. Deering Middle School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

**THE JOHN F. DEERING MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Catherine Boutin, Teacher

Paul Bovenzi, Teacher

Brian Dillon, Assistant Principal

Jane Drechsler, Teacher

Virginia Dimasi, Teacher

Kim Ellery, Parent

Claire Garcia, Parent

Lori Huntley, Teacher

Daniel Messier, Teacher

Johnna Pare, Teacher

Carol Pizzuti, Teacher

Kerri Robertson, Teacher

Sherri Sprague, Parent

Cheryl Tutalo, Principal

Marcelline Zambuco, Teacher

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Donna H. Reinalda  
Chair

On leave to the Rhode Island Department of Education  
Sowams School  
Barrington School Department  
Barrington, Rhode Island

Colleen Y. Amaral  
Special Educator  
Kickemuit Middle School  
Bristol-Warren, RI

Jennifer Asay  
Science Teacher  
Knotty Oak Middle School  
Coventry, RI

Charmane D. DiNardi  
Technology Teacher  
Chariho Regional High School  
Wood River Jct., RI

Frederick W. Hoppe, Jr.  
Special Education 7-8  
Lincoln Middle School  
Lincoln, RI

Melissa J. Horton  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Civics Teacher  
N.A. Ferri Middle School  
Johnston, RI

Armand Lussier  
7<sup>th</sup> grade Science  
Lincoln Middle School  
Lincoln, R.I.

Louise M. Mailloux  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade U.S. History  
North Cumberland Middle School  
Cumberland, R.I.

Cari A. Ravo  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA teacher  
Edward R. Martin Middle School  
East Providence, RI

Jane E. Regan  
Principal

Frank E. Thompson Middle School  
Newport, RI

Joany Santa  
Principal Intern  
Dr. Carl F. Calcutt Middle School  
Central Falls, RI

Keith Sanzen,  
7/8 ELA teacher,  
Scituate Middle School  
Scituate, Rhode Island

Timothy Ward  
Social Studies  
Westerly High School  
Westerly, RI

Shani Wallace  
Assistant Principal  
E.R. Martin Middle School  
East Providence, RI